

*After*  
by Elfie

How long can one go on,  
pulling at threads, coming undone,  
counting three-two-one, but  
too tired to fight, too tired to run,  
am I still here when I'm this numb,  
my trauma,  
myself,  
his victim,  
immortalised in poem after poem,  
because I still breathe to his rhythm  
and do not own a gun,  
and he is God's son,  
and I was seven days of fun,  
please,  
help me,  
tell me,  
how long can one go on  
after what has been done?

*Safety in Silence*  
by Elfie

words beaten to death  
by butterflies in my stomach  
my brain too bruised  
to form cohesive sentences  
mouth sewn shut  
itching dried blood, my statement lipstick  
a crippling inability to  
talk about my feelings keeps me safe  
safe like a secret inside a dead woman's throat  
twisted vocal cords neck broke  
choke and threads  
tying and knotting and dying  
and rotting empty graves  
unnamed no date  
she called it bravery alone again  
she did not know the details  
make my dress with no measurements  
and common cloth  
I cannot put it on  
my body is already worn  
worn and torn and burnt  
and buried life sentence  
make me make me  
she says I can reclaim myself  
these butterflies are still caterpillars  
they crawl up and heal  
my mind can see connections  
connect my existence to  
permanence for a while  
these words were beaten  
to the brink of life between my legs  
I was warned  
this would not be easy  
still  
I'll sacrifice silence  
even if I have to gut myself.

Elfie is a writer and poet, mainly  
of LGBTQ+ and mental health themed works, from Derbyshire, England.  
Her debut poetry chapbook *Will You Still Love Me if I Love Her?*  
was published in February 2019. She can be found @elfiebloom.



You dropped me off in a hurry,  
shaken with no guide.

Difficulties thrust to my side,  
like piles of sand on a bad gold-panning mission,  
but I am still,  
somehow,  
fazed by your actions that day.

When you showed me the mountains and burning fire all in one picture.

How can I trust you when the fruits of the tree you planted, poisoned my soul as your first act?

As the first woman,  
I created the trail of sin for eternity.

But how can I hate you when your grace is like the kiss of a ladybug on a miserable day?  
Like the sweet smell of approaching rain when my skin is scorched.

Your beauty reaches from the ocean floor to the hilltop unknown.

When my spirit can be the light to life; my vibrations you made beautiful and radiant.  
My energy so dainty yet ferocious.

My creation with ultimatums.  
The beginning and end, true revelation.

Sincerely,  
THE Receiver.

*Flower In Your Attic*  
by Kristin Garth

*for VC Andrews & my mother*

The plain are paranoid of pretty things,  
not pastel kitchens, wedding rings but what  
begins, pink skin, inside a pious womb then flings  
libidinous limbs in living rooms. Smut

inside dark irises, omnipotent  
as even his, lewd lord of Foxworth Hall  
who craves betrayal, Dresden dolls; he's meant  
to suffer. Girls will pay. Wife, after all,

never really looks away — you're well aware  
of blossomed breasts, honeysuckle hair hides  
sly-one-doe-eyed requests. Walk me upstairs  
to whips where unmarred skin is sanctified.

You made a petaled thing he would adore.  
Deflower me behind locked attic doors.

Kristin Garth is a Pushcart,  
Best of the Net & Rhysling  
nominated sonnet stalker with  
work in magazines like *Glass*,  
*Yes, Five:2*, *One, Occulum*, *Luna Luna*,  
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(TwistIT Press January 2020).

Follow her on Twitter: (@lolaandjolie),  
and her website (kristingarth.com)

*Incendiary*  
by Lammie Stabile

Straight edges blacken and curl  
Tiny palms, long, listing love lines  
inviting me to inhale their scent,  
bitter with just a touch of sweet  
Paper fingers bend, burn, beckon,  
words asking to be read once more

Sometimes, I think back  
to my flint set of ribs,  
your steel shoulders,  
the tinder of our reserve  
We were incendiary,  
designed to cause fires

Do you not see the pains I've taken?  
I've held flame after flame to you,  
to the scraps and shrapnel we had left  
Held them steady, in wild, resolute fists,  
even as I torched every record of us

We were incendiary,  
designed to ignite

